The Married Life of Helen and Warren

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On a Dark, Wintry Morning Warren Gets Up in a Surly, Irritable Mood

Warren yawned, raised himself on his elbow, and stared at the small nickel clock that was half hidden by the thermo bottle.

Mabel H. Urner.

Leaning out of bed to move the bottle, with sleepy awkwardness he knocked off the tumbler beside it.

"Oh—oh!" as the crash awoke Helen. "What's that?"

"Smashed a glass."

"It's one of the good glasses, too," drowsily.

"Then why the devil do you put things so I can't see the clock?" settling down for another five minutes. "Hope you had enough air last night—this room's cold as Greenland."

Helen, who always got up and closed the windows, now with shivering reluctance slid out of bed. In her haste a fluttering curtain caught in the sash, and the icy wind blew mercilessly through her thin nightgown as she tried to free it. Then she stooped to turn on the heat, and then, chilled through, crept back into bed.

"No, you don't!" growled Warren. "Warm up on your own side."

A sound of water gurgling in the radiator, then a loud vicious thump. More gurgling, and more thumps.

"You didn't turn it on full—that's what makes that blasted noise!"

"I turned it on as far as it would go," dreading to get up again.

In the gray light of the winter morning, the room was dim and cheerless. Helen's head ached dully, and a feeling of utter dejection made her long to sink back into the oblivion of sleep.

The dining room clock struck the half hour.

"I tell you, we've got to get to bed earlier," with a vicious jerk Warren threw back the bedclothes. "Tonight I'm going to turn in right after dinner."

This was one of Warren's stock resolutions. Yet even if they spent the evening at home he would always read until twelve.

"Oh, be careful of that broken glass!" warned Helen, as he lurched out of bed.

Thrusting his feet into his slippers, he slammed into the bathroom.

Helen still lay huddled in bed. Getting up was always hard, but getting up this dark, frosty morning was excruciating. Her whole body shrank from leaving the sheltering warmth of the bedclothes. As a rule she got up when Warren did, but sometimes she allowed herself the few extra moments until he stropped his razor. That was her ultimatum.

Zip-swish! The first stroke on the razor strop! With a heroic effect, Helen forced herself out of bed and ran into her room.

For a moment she crouched over the radiator. Then, turning on the light by her dresser, with numb fingers she thrust up her hair. By this time Warren was out of the bathroom.

As Helen went in the drenched shower-sheet was an accusing reminder. Warren's cold morning shower had always seemed a form of torture until she read of the "youth-preserving" virtues of the cold spray, and resolved to form the habit. For three mornings she had forced herself under the icy stream, then her courage had failed.

"Come here and look at this shirt!" called Warren angrily.

"In just a minute," gulping down a glass of water, an "internal morning bath" that Helen never omitted.

"You're to send nothing more to that laundry—understand?" throwing down his brushes, his hair sleek from the vigorous grooming.

Helen examined the torn neckband of the shirt on the bed.

"I can mend that, dear, so it'll not show."

"Yes; you fixed that plaited one, and my neck's raw yet. Call up that other laundry—the one we had last year."

"With a conciliatory "All right, dear," Helen hurried back to her room.

She finished dressing, then threw up the window, leaned out, and drew in ten long, deep breaths of the frosty air—another morning health-giving habit that Helen never neglected.

When she came into the dining room, Warren was at the table glancing over the war news. The deep, frowning lines between his eyes were the danger signals of a fault-finding and querulous mood.

The next half hour, until he left for the office, Helen knew would be a trying one. She must say nothing to irritate him, or he would go off in a temper that she would worry over for the rest of the day.

"See here, if it takes you so infernally long—why don't you get up in time?"

"I'm going to, dear. Hereafter, I'm going to get up and take a shower before you do."

"Huh!" contemptuously. "I'll believe that when I see it."

He ate his grapefruit in grumpy silence, the paper propped up before him. His cereal he pushed away with an irascible, "What's the matter with that cream? Looks like it's blued!"

"He didn't leave nothin' but milk this mornin', sir. That's the top of the bottle," volunteered Emma, as she came in with the bacon and eggs.

Helen poured the coffee and served Warren with two eggs and three pieces of bacon, and herself with one egg and two pieces of bacon.

"Why in thunder can't I ever get bacon cooked the way I want it? This stuff's burnt to a crisp," rapping it with his fork.

"Dear, she does cook yours less. That doesn't look very well done."

"You mean that's the way you want it—burnt to a shrivel. How much nourishment do you think's in that? If I didn't get a good square lunch—I'd not go far on this breakfast."

"Why, dear, you know I want you to have everything just as you want it."

"Huh, I know that bluff. You take mighty good care to have things your way. You want your bacon like dried chips, and your boiled eggs hard as bullets—so I've got to stand for the same kind of fodder."

Helen did not try to meet this tirade with argument. Instead she rang for the maid.

"Emma," as the girl came to the door, "after this don't cook any of the bacon so much. I'll take mine the same as Mr. Curtis. Cut it thicker and don't crisp it."

But even this effort at conciliation Warren ignored. Having gulped down his second cup of coffee, he took up his paper, pushed back his chair, and strode out into the hall.

For a moment Helen's hurt resentment kept her from running after him. He was getting into his overcoat. She heard the rattle of his cane as he took it from the rack—then the opening of the hall door.

"Warren!" She darted after him—but the door had closed.

Even then she felt he would come back to kiss her good-by, with an ironical, "Thought I'd gone, eh?"

The seconds passed. She opened the door. He was not standing before the elevator. The hall was empty.

"Shall I put this cloth in the wash, ma'am—or will it do for lunch?" as Helen, heartsick, passed the dining room.

"Yes—oh, no, it doesn't matter," running to the front room window.

A delivery boy with a basket, a couple of girls hurrying to work, a shambling old man in a wind-whipped, threadbare coat—except for these the street was empty. Warren had already turned the corner.

It was foolish to feel so wretched, she told herself with passionate reassurance. She had done nothing to irritate him. It was not her fault. She must not let this spoil her day.

But Helen had the feminine trait of magnifying the thing that distressed her by the simple process of brooding.

By noon she had visions of Warren leaving her altogether, and of herself facing a loveless and destitute old age. The impulse to "do something" to avert these threatening calamities was irresistible. She could no longer keep away from the phone. She must call him up before he went to lunch.

His stenographer answered.

"Yes, Mrs. Curtis. Mr. Curtis is right here. Just a moment!"

"Hello!" It was Warren's voice, curt and hurried.

"Oh, dear, I couldn't help calling you up," quiveringly. "I—I'm awfully sorry about that bacon."

"Eh, what's that?"

"I—I'm so sorry about the bacon."

"Talk up, I can't hear you," impatiently. "Wait a minute, Miss Middleton," to his stenographer, who was evidently typing. "Now, what is it?"

Something in the curt, matter-of-factness of his voice helped restore Helen's sense of proportion.

"Oh, I—I," floundering desperately for something to say, "I can't find the name of the laundry. I thought maybe you'd have it down there."

"Oh," in impatient disgust, "I can't bother about that now. Colonial—Cumberland, some such name. Look it up in the book. By the way, I met Stevens in the subway; they want us to come to dinner Thursday. See if I've got a clean white waistcoat."

Helen turned from the phone with a hysterical desire to laugh. Would she never learn? It was always like this—she was always anguishing over something to which Warren had not given a thought.

Did other women wear themselves out in just such futile hours of useless, youth-wasting worry? Were the peace of mind and happiness of other wives so pathetically dependent upon their husbands' moods? Or did she alone analyze and anguish over every trivial discord?

THOUGHT SHE COULD NOT LIVE

Restored to Health by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Unionville, Mo.—"I suffered from a female trouble and I got so weak that I could hardly walk across the floor without holding on to something. I had nervous spells and my fingers would cramp and my face would draw, and I could not speak, nor sleep to do any good, had no appetite, and everyone thought I would not live.

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WAS DOUBLING UP ON LIFE

Small Girl's Unfortunate Remembrance of Mother's Remark Caused Embarrassment.

Col. George Harvey said at a banquet in his honor in New York:

"We editors like criticism, especially when it is of the very favorable kind that I've received this evening.

"But not all criticism is favorable, even for the most successful editors. A good many editors, in fact, often find themselves in the position of the rich old broker whose little grandniece said:

"'Uncle, how long do people live?'

"'The natural span of man's life,' the uncle answered, 'is as the Good Book tells us, three score years and ten.'

"'Oh, then you'll live to be one hundred and forty, won't you, uncle?'

"The old man looked around the room crowded with relatives and laughed heartily.

"'Why, no,' he said. 'Why, no. How do you make that out?'

"'Isn't it true, then,' said the little girl—'isn't it true what mamma says about your living a double life?'"—Washington Star.

CARE FOR CHILDREN'S

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Tough Luck.

"You remember that chap Jones who made a bet of ten thousand dollars that he would walk from San Francisco to New York without a cent in his pocket?"

"Yes. Did he win the bet?"

"Not quite. He got as far as Philadelphia, and there he was arrested as a vagrant and forced against his will to ride three blocks in a patrol wagon. That disqualified him."

Deserves It.

"Heavens! The mob will tear that man to pieces! Can't something be done to stop them?"

"Let 'em alone. The man they're trying to lynch is the chap who invented the installment plan of selling books."

Not Before.

"I suppose you always tell your pupils frankly just what you think of their voices, professor?"

"When their money is all gone, yes."

Uncle Sam has one bank to every 9,700 people.

IN THE ENGINE ROOM

Place of Stress When Battleship Is in Action.

Fighting Strain Becomes of an Intensity Hard to Imagine—Deadly Torpedo the Weapon That Is Most Feared.

Let us, as a matter of interest, imagine that we are in the engine room of a modern dreadnaught in action. On each side of us, unobtrusively stowed away in their mahogany, brass-bound cases, are the great turbines. Their humming—though we cannot see them—fills the vast space with the sound as of a million bees let loose. Near each one hovers a grimy stoker, oil can in hand, and his duty it is to see that these monster humming tops do not lack for lubrication.

Right in front, on the foremost bulkhead of the engine room, are the telegraph dials and the telephones, each of which is in connection with the bridge, and under the direct control of the captain. These are the things which tell us how the fight is going for the keen engineer can read signs and portents in the changes which are rung upon the telegraph dials.

A tremendous thing is the fighting strain. It is bad even up in the great turrets where men play their parts in the grim drama, and hurl death and destruction at the foe, but down here, where one does nothing but wait for orders, it is terrible.

The only man who does not seem to feel the strain is the one who has apparently the least to do, and that is the engineer. He, however, is busily doing mental arithmetic. He knows how many revolutions his screws are doing per minute, and he realizes that as yet she has still a little bit of speed up her sleeve.

By and by that last half knot may be asked for, and he is calculating how much speed he will be able to present the captain with when that final effort is asked for. No one knows but he, and he won't tell.

There seems to be a kind of waiting expression on most of the faces, and if they could tell you what they were all waiting for it would surprise you. Shut up as they are in a small steel box full of machinery, they are not thinking of the chance of an enemy's projectile coming through and killing them; nor are they waiting for death to come to them in some other manner. What they are dreading is that something should go wrong with their beloved engines — something that would prevent their "doing their bit" in this fight.

They are listening—ever listening—for the hiss of escaping steam which will tell them of a main steam pipe hit and carried away; for the shot that might smash one of the boilers into small pieces; for the rattle of the steering engine as the rudder is blown away, and the ship hangs, without a guide, in the balance.

And then, with a sickening sidelong twist and a rattle of the steering engine, the floor of the engine room takes on a sickening slant. The ship has made a sudden and acute turn.

The engineer's face turns from cheery optimism red to a fear-stricken sallow green.

"My God!" he mutters. "Submarines!"

Every man in that engine room and every stoker in the stokeholds knows what that sudden and horrible twist means. It means that the ship has commenced a quadrille with death; that underwater craft are seeking to end her life and the fight at the same time.

The strained look has gone now. Everyone is eager and anxious to do but one thing, and that is to obey the orders which come down from the bridge as fast as they possibly can be obeyed. The bridge is having an anxious time, but the men in the depths trust it and reckon it is up to dealing with the biggest flotilla of submarines that the enemy owns, any day.

Then, while the ship is running all she knows, the unexpected happens. With a louder and more sudden roar than ever the steering engine rattles over to hard a port. At precisely the same second the telegraph rings "Full astern, starboard engine. Full ahead port." The ship takes a horrible heel as the rudders—two of them—grip her, the port screw slows down perceptibly as it feels the mighty column of water deflected from the rudder, and the starboard one hums along smoothly as it feel the reversed turbine's thrust.

And even as they spin round the men can hear the guns putting in good work and blazing away for all they are worth. Ten minutes later the enemy's fleet—or what is left of them—are steaming for harbor again as fast as they can go.

Imagine yourself shut up in a chattering, humming steel box, with the odds on being killed either by shell, or torpedo explosion, or drowning, or scalding to death, and with Death himself throwing all sorts of missiles at you which you can't even see coming, and you will have a very good idea of what being in a battleship's engine room is like in a real pitched battle.

TEST THAT NEVER FAILED

Mine Foreman Had Particular Reason for Patronizing Sawyer's Place on His "Vacation."

Among the old miners of Siskiyou county a man can get worse whisky at Sawyer's bar than in any other place on earth. This is the belief of the gold-diggers of that section, and that faith is accepted as orthodox, says the San Francisco Call.

Regularly every Christmas Billy X, foreman of the Oro Fino mine, takes his layoff down at Sawyer's. Once the superintendent asked him why he always selected that place for his vacation.

"I want to have one yearly drunk," said Billy, "and I want to know just when I am drunk, so that I may enjoy the sensation."

"Well, can't you enjoy the sensation in any other portion of the country or state or continent?" asked the superintendent.

"No. When I'm drinking Sawyer's whisky and it begins to taste good, then I know I'm drunk."

What She Expected.

"Look at her," said the ironmonger, indicating a departing customer. "She sent her wringer here to be repaired. I promised it to her for this week provided I could get a certain new part in time from the makers. I couldn't get it. Now she wants me to pay a charwoman who came unnecessarily half a crown an' twopence for the clothes."

The ironmonger paused to breathe heavily.

"But that's not all. Her husband dines out on washdays and as he dined out on a washday that wasn't a washday—you understand?—she says I ought to pay for his dinner. No, she doesn't ask anything else. And they call 'em the weaker sex."—London Tit-Bits.

And So It Is.

"What do you consider the greatest human paradox?"

"A secret session of a woman's club."

There are 24 clubs exclusively for ladies in London.

The Sphinx on Natation.

The Sphinx propounded a riddle.

"How many girls would swim out beyond the danger line if the life guard was a woman?" she asked.

King Alfonso of Spain is a general in the British army.

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